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ABSTRACT

The Massachusetts Council on Vocational Education surveyed 500 members of business and industry in 125 program advisory committees regarding involvement in the Job Training Partnership Act. The purpose of the survey was to document private sector perspectives on the content and value of their participation on vocational-technical education committees. The rate of return was 36 percent; findings were based on 142 completed questionnaires. Findings showed over half had served on a vocational education committee for 3 years or longer. Over half served on committees affiliated with regional vocational-technical schools. In 8 of 24 activities, respondents had some significant involvement; many of those activities required review, planning, and information sharing. Respondents ranked their overall level of participation and the effectiveness of their participation slightly lower than moderate. The greatest barrier for committee participation was limited time of participants. The majority indicated opportunities for participation were both quantitatively and qualitatively lower than they would prefer. Respondents ranked 3 of 17 incentives as high and the remaining 14 as significant. Forty-six percent believed the overall impact of the public sector on vocational education was not sufficient. (Appendixes include recommendations, discussion of the sample, and instrument.) (YLB)

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PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A Survey of General and Program Advisory Committee Members

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This report, prepared under the requirements of Section 112 of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, Public Law 98-524, has been duly submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

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We are also indebted to other members of the vocational education community who reviewed a draft of the survey. Many of their insightful recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the survey.

Finally, this report was edited by James L. Green, Executive Director of the Council, and Katharine Roberts, staff Executive Assistant. We would also like to recognize and thank Katharine Roberts for her involvement in every aspect of the survey preparation and mailing.

All of these efforts contributed to the production of this final report and to our increase in understanding about the motivations and practices of private-sector members on vocational-technical committees in vocational education in Massachusetts.

PREFACE

The State Council on Vocational Education was established under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-524). This legislation requires the State Council on Vocational Education to assess the vocational-technical system in the Commonwealth and to evaluate the effects of the Perkins Act on a biennial basis. In keeping with the Council's past policy, the evaluation focuses on a specific aspect of the Act. This year, due to the Council's intense interest in and advocacy for private sector involvement in vocational education, we have concentrated on the public-private sector linkage.

The Perkins Act assigned specific duties to the Councils relative to the involvement of business and industry in vocational education programs. One mandate contained in the law states:

> Recommend procedures to the State board to ensure and enhance the participation of the public in the provision of vocational education at the local level within the State, particularly the participation of local employers and local labor organizations. [Section 112 (d) (7)]

A second mandate pertaining to private sector involvement asks the State Council to make recommendations to the State board concerning the "conduct of vocational education programs" that relate to business concerns [Section 112 (d) (5)].

Finally, the Perkins Act requires the State Council to "evaluate the vocational education delivery systems assisted under this Act, in terms of its adequacy and effectiveness in achieving the purposes of the Act." Private sector involvement is an explicit purpose of the law.

> Promote greater cooperation between public agencies and the private sector in preparing individuals for employment, in promoting the quality of vocational education in the States, and in making the vocational system more responsive to the labor market in the States. [Section 2 (3)]

The Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education is required by law to assess and make recommendations relative to private sector involvement in vocational education and to "advise the Governor, the State board, the State job training coordinating council, the Secretary [of Education] and the Secretary of Labor of these findings and recommendations." These recommendations are included in a separate attachment.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Vocational education's involvement with the private sector has had a long history, but never has this connection been so vital to quality programming since the advent of the high technology era. An explosion of new technologies and scientific advances has dramatically affected the labor market and the ways that many jobs are now being performed.

In recent years, the private sector has joined educators in voicing their concern regarding the quality of education as a whole. The private sector has communicated an increased need for a host of skills ranging from occupational expertise to critical thinking skills.

In addition to their support for higher quality education, private sector representatives provide another important service to vocational-technical education as members of program and general advisory committees. In Massachusetts, such participation is required in all vocational-technical programs under Chapter 74 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended by Chapter 731 of the Acts of 1988. (Chapter 74 governs state-aided and -approved programs in agriculture, allied health, automotive, construction, marketing, service occupations, industrial manufacturing, and technical fields.)

Committee membership must consist of representatives from business, industry and labor relevant to the occupational skills being taught. Each school that offers one or more State Chapter 74 programs must have a General Advisory Committee that includes the chairperson of each program advisory committee and advises the school as a whole on all vocational programs. State rules also require all federally funded Perkins programs, both secondary and postsecondary, to have advisory committees. Both general and program advisory committees can perform many functions, including sharing labor market information, validation of tasks and competencies, equipment and facilities advice, career guidance and placement, professional development, community public relations and program evaluation. (Mass. DOE, 1989)

The Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education (hereafter referred to as the State Council) decided to document private sector perspectives on the content and value of their participation on vocational-technical education committees by distributing a survey, Private Sector Involvement in Vocational Education, to 500 members of business and industry in 125 program advisory committees. Although the private sector includes labor representatives as well as members of business and industry, the survey was specifically designed to target only the latter two categories. One of the goals of the survey was to document the degree of

private-sector involvement in the activities referred to above. The questionnaire did not concentrate on program outcomes or committee activities, but asked for private sector perspectives on their own involvement. The survey contained closed-ended questions that asked recipients to rank their levels of involvement in a variety of specific committee activities, to rank their overall level of participation and the effectiveness of this involvement, to indicate whether or not they thought the private-sector impact on vocational education in the State was sufficient, and, if not, to suggest in an open-ended manner ways in which it might be improved. (See Appendix B for sample survey.) Some of the content and format of the questions were based on the instruments used in the 1985 Massachusetts Department of Education study and the 1988 study on private sector involvement by the Illinois Council on Vocational Education. (Mass. DOE, 1985; Illinois, 1988)

According to records at the Massachusetts State Department of Education, one-quarter of program advisory committee members were listed as chairpersons and would therefore automatically be members of the general advisory committee of the school they were servicing. Thus it was anticipated that all those surveyed would be program advisory committee members and 25% of these would also be members of a general advisory committee. The pool of 500 included members from committees working with postsecondary as well as secondary schools. [Occupational and vocational-technical education programs are offered in 220 school districts and at 18 postsecondary institutions (community colleges and technical institutes), whose organizational structures range from an individual school in one city or town to a regional school with several cities and towns as members. (Mass. DOE, 1989)]

Secondary-school-level recipients of the survey were selected as part of a stratified random sample, so that those surveyed would proportionally represent those program areas where student enrollment was greatest. At the same time, an attempt was made to represent proportionally the kinds of schools in which Chapter 74 courses are offered, with heavier emphasis placed on regional vocational-technical and schools offering five or more Chapter 74 approved programs. Due to the comprehensive representation of schools offering vocational-technical classes, geographical representation from the major regions of the state was automatically incorporated into the original sample. (Please refer to Appendix A for a fuller description of the sampling strategy, as well as a breakout of the survey recipients by program area and type of secondary school.)

Program advisory committees are also required at the postsecondary level for Perkins-funded programs. In order to include this educational level in the sample, a letter was sent out to all 18 community and technical colleges in the State, requesting membership lists. Eight institutions from all major regions of Massachusetts responded, and committees were again targeted on the basis of the program areas with the highest student enrollments. Questionnaires were sent to 68 committee members, representing six program areas. The institutions were nonrandomly chosen.

The rate of return for the survey was 36% and the report findings are based on the 142 confidential, completed questionnaires.* This rate of return is similar to the 39% return rate reported by the Massachusetts Department of Education in their 1985 study of vocational-technical committees. (Mass. DOE, 1985) This current State Council report draws exclusively on the results of our recently conducted survey, with some reference to prior state studies on vocational education. The State Council drew on these findings, as well as national studies and reports, in preparing its recommendations.

* Of the 500 surveys mailed out, 19 questionnaires, or 4%, were returned by the post office as undeliverable. 161 were returned, including both secondary- and postsecondary- level respondents. Of these, 12% had not been correctly identified as a current or former member of a program advisory committee and the surveys were returned incomplete. Discounting the 19 questionnaires that were incorrectly addressed, the rate of return for the survey was 36%.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Of those returning the completed forms, 75% indicated that they served on a program advisory committee, 45% served on general advisory committees and an additional 4% served on some other committee that was related to vocational education and training. No one was a member of a Regional Employment Board (Private Industry Council, or PIC).

According to Department of Education membership lists, all those persons receiving the survey should have been former or current members of program advisory committees. However, only 75% of the respondents marked that they were a member of such a committee. We can surmise that the remaining 25% may have incorrectly filled out this question on the survey.

In addition, many of those who did indicate that they were members of a program advisory committee failed to specify the occupational area; consequently, we are not able to present a complete profile of the respondents. However, of those who indicated that they were members of a program advisory committee and also listed the area (n=99), the major program areas with the highest representation were service, construction and technical areas. These major program areas are also those that had the largest student enrollments in the 1989-90 school year. (Please refer to Appendix A for a further discussion of the program areas of both the targeted sample and those completing the survey.)

TABLE 1. PROGRAM AREA

25%	Service occupations (e.g., cosmetology, culinary arts, commercial art, business technology)
22%	Construction (e.g., carpentry, electrical, plumbing)
20%	Technical (e.g., computer programming, drafting, electronics, graphic arts)
8%	Industrial/Manufacturing (e.g., machine shop, metalworking, cabinetmaking)
6%	Marketing (e.g., marketing, hotel and lodging)
5%	Automotive (e.g., automotive mechanics, body and fender repair)
0%	Agriculture (e.g., horticulture)

Over half of the respondents (56%) had served on a vocational education committee for three years or longer, so that they would have had considerable exposure to the operations of their respective committees. Only a quarter of the respondents had served on their committees for less than two years. The vast majority (90%) were still serving on their committee.

Over half of the respondents (54%) serve on committees that are affiliated with regional vocational-technical schools; about one-fourth are associated with city or town vocational schools, 9% with comprehensive schools and 6% with community colleges. Only 1% of the respondents work with academic regional or county vocational-agricultural schools.

TABLE 2. TYPE OF SCHOOL

Question: Please indicate the type of education facility with which you are primarily involved.

54%	Regional Vocational-Technical School
26%	City/Town Vocational School
9%	Comprehensive High School
6%	Community College
1%	Academic Regional School
1%	County Vocational-Agricultural School
2%*	Missing

* Percentage totals 99% due to rounding of figures.

Although the State Council had originally hoped to do a separate analysis of the surveys received from the community colleges, the numbers returned did not make this feasible. Consequently, all the returned questionnaires were analyzed in the same pool.

Respondents represented a variety of industries, with construction, health services, technology and manufacturing together accounting for almost 60% of all respondents. These industries approximately parallel the sampled, major program areas of construction, service occupations and technical. The areas of industry represented by the respondents are broken out below:

TABLE 3. AREA OF INDUSTRY

Question: Indicate your primary area of industry by checking one of the following.

19%	Construction trades
14%	Technology (manufacturing,services)
14%	Health services
11%	Manufacturing (traditional)
9%	Repair services
7%	Hospitality services (e.g., lodging, food)
5%	Personal services (e.g., cosmetology)
4%	Transportation, communication, utilities
4%	Finance, insurance, real estate
4%	Social services (e.g., child care, family services)
4%	Retail trades
2%	Government (including postal and military)
0%	Agriculture
3%	Other

However, these areas of industry represented by the respondents do not resemble closely the projected year 2000 employment distribution for Massachusetts, although some of the categories are not directly comparable. Projections for the year 2000 anticipated a much higher proportion devoted to retail and wholesale trade (24%), for example, and a much lower amount related to construction (5%). (Mass. Department of Employment and Training, 1989). Moreover, extrapolating from state DET employment categories, we developed a "technology" category that included manufacturing and related services, and estimated the employment projection to be nearly 20% in the year 2000, as opposed to the 14% reported in Table 3.

Small business owners, professional personnel and managers together accounted for nearly 60% of those completing the questionnaire. Lowest representation (5% or fewer) was in the occupational positions of clerical personnel, CEO of large business, agricultural specialist/farmer, sales representative and CEO of small business.

TABLE 4. OCCUPATIONAL POSITION

Question: Please indicate your occupational position by checking one of the following.

25%	Owner of small business
18%	Professional personnel
16%	Manager, vice president
13%	Supervisor
7%	Technician
7%	Labor/Trade
4%	CEO of small business
2%	Agricultural specialist/ Farmer
2%	Sales representative
0%	Clerical personnel
0%	CEO of large business
6%	Other (e.g., school administrator, educator, police officer)

Two-thirds of the respondents work in organizations that are medium-sized to small, with 100 or fewer employees. This information, combined with what we know about the occupational positions of many of the sampled committee members, portrays the typical vocational-technical committee member as an owner or middle-level manager of a small business.

TABLE 5. WORKPLACE SIZE

Question: What is the size of your workplace?

32%	Under 10 employees
34%	10-99 employees
9%	100-249 employees
8%	250-499 employees
12%	over 500 employees
5%	missing/don't know

The typical respondent was a White, nondisabled male. Less than one-third of the completed surveys were filled out by women; only 3% by a non-White person; and only 1% by someone with a disability.

Report findings are presented using the entire pool of respondents. That is, no separate analyses were conducted on the basis of respondent characteristics, workplace characteristics, and program area. We believed that although additional investigations might be interesting, it would not assist the State Council in the development of recommendations that would necessarily apply to all vocational-technical committees in Massachusetts. In addition, the small sample sizes for many of these data categories mitigated against such analysis.

PERCEPTIONS OF PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Respondents were asked to rank their level of involvement with 24 specific activities listed in the survey. Eight activities were ranked overall as being those for which the respondents had some, if not a high, significance of involvement.

TABLE 5. PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PRIVATE-SECTOR PARTICIPATION: ACTIVITIES RANKED HIGHER THAN 'SOMEWHAT SIGNIFICANT'

Question: How significant has your involvement been in the following activities? Please use the scale: 3=very significant; 2=somewhat significant; 1=not significant at all; na=not applicable.

2.32	Review existing equipment, facilities and resources
2.28	Recommend new equipment for programs
2.27	Help make programs and courses relevant to workplace needs
2.27	Advise on extent to which basic skills should be taught
2.26	Advise school on local job market trends
2.22	Identify new skill requirements
2.12	Help school establish/revise goals of vocational education
2.07	Encourage students to continue their education

It is hardly surprising that many of the activities with which members are most involved are those that require review, planning and information sharing. Such activities are among the highest personal incentives for individual committee members and are also among the least resource intensive (although they may well be labor intensive).

In the 1985 Department of Education study of vocational-technical committees in the Commonwealth, respondents were asked to rank their involvement in 38 activities. The ratings were "low to moderate" for most of the activities, with the most extensive involvement in general program planning, and advisement in the areas of curriculum/ instruction and equipment/facilities. (Mass.DOE, 1985) One encouraging finding from the current study is the increased activity of 'advising on the extent to which basic skills should be taught'. In the 1985 report, 67% of the responding committee members indicated that they had little or no involvement in this activity, but about half thought that participation should increase. This clearly has happened.

The five activities listed below are not pursued to any significant degree by the majority of respondents. Most notably, none of those surveyed indicated that they had ever reviewed a school's career guidance policies and activities.

TABLE 6. PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PRIVATE-SECTOR PARTICIPATION: ACTIVITIES RANKED AS 'NONE' BY MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS *

Question: How significant has your involvement been in the following activities? Please use the scale: 3=very significant; 2=somewhat significant; 1=not significant at all; na=not applicable.

1.00	Review school's career guidance policies and activities
1.30	Collaborate with the local Private Industry Council/ REB
1.38	Advise on applications for State/Federal program funds
1.46	Provide in-service or work experience opportunities for upgrading instructors' technical skills
1.49	Address unique needs of special school populations

Three activities from the list above -- reviewing career guidance policies, advising on funding applications and providing staff development for instructors -- were also reported as having low participation levels in the 1985 study. Presuming that committee activities reflect established agendas, this consistency suggests that these activities are among the lower priorities for those setting the agenda for vocational-technical committees.

Interestingly enough, many of the activities receiving the least attention in committees are among the highest priorities for State officials. Federal and State legislation and position papers have highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of special school populations, coordination with Regional Employment Boards, and the promotion of student careers.** However, a 1987 study prepared for the State Council by Abt Associates illustrated in detail the "lack of established priorities for the multiple goals set forth by the various laws, plans, and policy statements." (Millsap, 1987)

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* The figures in the left-hand column of Table 6 are averages derived from the ratings of all respondents. As a separate piece of information, the majority of respondents ranked their level of involvement as 'not significant at all' for each of these committee activities.

** Refer to the Perkins Vocational Education Act; Mass. State Plan for Vocational Education; Chapter 74; Comprehensive Policy on Occupational Education; and others.

The majority of respondents indicated they had some involvement in the remaining 11 activities on the State Council survey -- the middle tier -- although this involvement was moderate across all the questionnaires. Many of these relate to hands-on involvement with the educational experiences of students, such as arranging for guest speakers and cooperative work sites, and with the immediate and practical needs of vocational education, such as securing resources.

TABLE 7. PERCEIVED LEVEL OF PRIVATE-SECTOR PARTICIPATION: ACTIVITIES RANKED AS 'SOME' BY MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS *

Question: How significant has your involvement been in the following activities? Please use the scale: 3=very significant; 2=somewhat significant; 1=not significant at all; na=not applicable.

1.97	Advise on extent to which higher order thinking skills should be taught
1.90	Review and evaluate course materials
1.74	Arrange for occupation-related field trips for students
1.74	Identify potential sites for cooperative or other types of work experience
1.73	Help school set priorities for budgetary expenditures
1.71	Provide hands-on instruction to students *in the workplace*
1.70	Develop criteria for evaluating quality of vocational programs
1.64	Help acquaint the community with the needs of vocational education
1.63	Serve as/arrange for guest speaker or instructor
1.59	Recruit students into vocational education programs
1.55	Help secure equipment donations, outside funding for program

The participation levels of several of these activities appears to have risen since the 1985 Department of Education study. These include:

- reviewing and evaluating course materials, where over half of the 1985 respondents had little or no involvement in such activities;

- helping to set priorities for budgetary expenditures, where 60% of the 1985 respondents had little or no involvement in developing recommendations for budgetary expenditures;

- identifying potential sites for cooperative or other types of work experience, where 61% of the 1985 respondents indicated little or no involvement in this activity.

- developing criteria for evaluating the quality of vocational programs, where substantially more than half of the 1985 members reported little or no involvement in most evaluation activities.

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* The figures in the left-hand column of Table 7 are averages derived from the ratings of all respondents. As a separate piece of information, the majority of respondents ranked their level of involvement as 'some' for each of these committee activities.

These results suggest that there has been increased participation in certain activities undertaken by vocational-technical committees since the mid-1980s.

OVERALL PARTICIPATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

In reference to questions about overall participation and overall effectiveness, respondents ranked their overall level of participation slightly lower than moderate, with 1.79 on a scale where 1=little, 2=moderate, and 3=high. Respondents separately estimated the effectiveness of their participation, which was nearly identical to the first figure, at 1.75.

BARRIERS TO PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Given the willingness of private-sector members to participate on advisory committees, it seemed important to gain a better understanding of perceived obstacles, so that these might be reduced. The questionnaire asked committee members to rank 17 potential obstacles to their involvement in vocational education. The top two obstacles in Table 8 were ranked as some barrier by a clear majority of respondents; the following two obstacles were rated as some barrier by approximately half of those surveyed. The remaining 13 were not ranked as a barrier by most of those who answered the survey.

TABLE 8. BARRIERS TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Question: Please rank each of the following potential obstacles to your involvement in vocational education using the scale: 3=high barrier; 2=some barrier; 1=no barrier; dk=don't know/no response.

1.74	**Don't have sufficient time.**
1.63	**Opportunities for participation infrequent.**
1.54	Not asked to do important things.
1.49	Previous efforts have had little or no impact.
1.49	Committee membership a formality.
1.46	Unclear mission or role.
1.46	School administrators not receptive to change.
1.44	Differing philosophies.
1.39	Poor communication among committee members.
1.38	Insufficient background information provided by school administrators.
1.36	Inadequate support staff on committee.
1.25	Lack of expertise in academic/curricular area.
1.21	Company places low priority on my involvement.
1.20	Pressure to provide material resources.
1.18	Lack of expertise in skill demands in local area.
1.12	Geographical distance.
1.10	Too much paperwork involved.

Significantly, two of the three highest ranking obstacles indicated by respondents related not to their own constraints, but to those of the committee operations itself: infrequent opportunities for participation and not asked to do important things. In fact, the three next-highest ranking obstacles continue to suggest that many members feel the committee mission and their individual roles are unclear or unimportant. According to the majority of those completing the survey, therefore, opportunities for participation were both *quantitatively* and *qualitatively* lower than they would prefer.

At the same time, the greatest barrier for committee participation is the limited time of participants, which suggests that although members may be ready to contribute more, they cannot be expected to spend an inordinate amount of time on committee activities. As one respondent stated:

> *It is difficult to match the time requirements of the committee process to my day-to-day responsibilities. We need help with our current employees as much as new people coming in.*

Once one considers aspects of committee operations, the picture becomes quite complex. The overall message is that vocational education committees need to streamline and more efficiently make use of their members. This was reiterated in the written comments of those surveyed, which are presented later in this report. However, the degree to which individual committees function smoothly and effectively as decisionmaking bodies will obviously vary tremendously from group to group and cannot always be captured by simple indicators.

For example, election of a chairperson is required by regulation. Almost one-fifth of the respondents indicated that their committee had no chair, although a few wrote that this did not necessarily impede the operation of their committees, since they simply shared leadership. Approximately one-third of the respondents said that their chairperson was appointed; only a slightly higher percentage marked that their chair has been elected.

More than three-quarters indicated that they receive a written or verbal response to their committee's recommendation from their school at least once a year. However, nearly one-fifth had not. It is difficult to interpret this finding: does one see the glass one-fifth empty or four-fifths full?

Sixty-five percent of those returning the survey had become members of their committees since 1985, the year that the Massachusetts Department of Education began to require an orientation to program advisory committees in order to increase their effectiveness. Although the survey did not ask respondents to specify what kind of orientation they had had and if they thought that some kind of orientation would have been helpful, it did ask those 65% to indicate if they had been exposed to any of the Department of Education materials developed specifically for this purpose -- namely, Vocational Technical Advisory Committees: A Guide to Effective Utilization, and the accompanying videotape. Of these, less than one-third had been exposed to the Department's guide and only 6% to the videotape.

The Department of Education orientation guide is an important step in mitigating against poor committees that result from a lack of management skill and sensitivity. There are other resources and studies on committees that have sought to illuminate procedures and characteristics that have been associated with effectiveness. For example, one study out of Ohio State University determined that effective committees meet regularly (at least 10 times a year), conduct at least 4 public hearings at various sites, consider employing professional people (1-2), have good working relations with State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and others, and build sources of information and input. (Franchak, 1984) The State Council survey focused on the effectiveness of the committees in terms of impact and not on their operations (such as how many times a year they meet). However, the survey findings imply that the committee operations themselves can be a barrier to private-sector involvement in vocational education, and that additional attention should be focused on this area.

INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The questionnaire asked committee members to rank 17 potential incentives to their involvement in vocational education. Three of these incentives were ranked as a *high* incentive by the majority of respondents. All of the remaining 14 incentives were ranked as *significant* by committee members. The results suggest that private-sector members are very motivated to improve vocational education in the Commonwealth.

TABLE 9. INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE-SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Question: Please rank each of the following incentives to your involvement in vocational education using the scale: 3=high incentive; 2=some incentive; 1=no incentive; dk=don't know/no response.

2.63	Improve the quality of vocational education/ training
2.61	Improve basic skills of students graduating from secondary institutions
2.51	Provide opportunities for work-related experiences
2.50	Encourage students to continue their education/training
2.48	Improve the relevance of vocational education to workplace needs
2.42	Modernize and update equipment in schools
2.38	Contribute to my community or school system
2.34	Enhance students' career decisionmaking
2.19	Coordinate and share information with schools and other private sector organizations involved in economic development
2.12	Enhance sex equity in access to all occupations
2.12	Recruit potential employees
2.10	Increase U.S. competitiveness in world market
2.08	Enhance the participation of special student populations (such as minorities, economically disadvantaged, displaced homemakers and handicapped persons)
2.03	Improve relations with local vocational education institutes
1.98	Recruit students into vocational programs
1.93	Provide public relations benefit for company or organization
1.89	Network with other local businesses

These incentives also are an indication of the priorities of private sector members. Note that the activities of setting overall goals for vocational education and training and focusing on basic skills are consistent with those activities ranked as having among the highest participation levels on the advisory committees.

Other incentives, however, when contrasted with the actual activities of the vocational education committees, reveal some interesting discrepancies. The high-ranking incentive 'provide students with work-related experiences' could be interpreted as respondents expressing an interest in providing hands-on experiences. Yet, low participation levels were reported for 'identify potential sites for cooperative or other types of work experiences', 'provide hands-on instruction to students in the workplace', and 'arrange for occupation-related field trips for students'. This could be an indication that private-sector members desire more contact with the students themselves.

Another discrepancy between the incentives of private-sector members and actual activities is apparent in the category of encouraging students to continue their education. Although ranked as the fourth-highest incentive overall, and as a "high" incentive by the majority of respondents, members reported only some involvement in this activity.

Note that the incentives related to special student populations and enhancing sex equity rate relatively low compared to other incentives. This is consistent with the low participation levels reported for the activity 'address unique needs of special school populations'. As mentioned earlier in the report, this is an interesting "reality check" against the legislative and policy priorities promoted in public documents.

NECESSITY OF IMPROVING PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A substantial percentage -- almost half of those surveyed (46%) -- believe that the overall impact of the private sector on vocational education is *not* sufficient. Twenty-nine percent are satisfied with the impact of the private sector and 25% are not sure.

Several members praised the vocational education committees and vocational education in general...

> *I don't think enough businesses realize the quality of the students that are graduating from the __ Vocational School. I think it is one of the best kept secrets in the area.*
>
> *I am very proud of my involvement with [the school]. We have developed a wonderful program. The staff there are knowledgeable, supportive, respectful and hard working. We have seen the results of our labors....*

Many of the earlier responses on the survey suggested that private-sector members were prepared to become more involved, given the opportunity. The picture that is emerging is one in which committee members are ready to move from a cooperative model to a collaborative one. Cooperation is exemplified by communication, use of resource trips, field trips and sharing of labor market information. Collaboration goes a step further, resulting in donations of equipment and other resources, job placement arrangements, and joint design and delivery of courses. (Maurice, 1984)

Many committee members suggested ways in which private sector impact might be increased. The most frequently mentioned suggestions were (paraphrased):

- Increasing private sector involvement in local schools (general)
- Providing cooperative or on-site work experiences
- Increasing public awareness and the visibility of vocational education
- Increasing outreach to private sector companies
- Taking greater advantage of current private sector members on committees
- Better mobilizing the private sector to provide material resources

The following selective comments, written by advisory committee members, relate to these major points:

> *[How to improve private-sector impact on vocational education?] By presenting the benefits of vocational education to individual companies. By [schools] being willing to first give before asking for something. By adapting the attitude that there's a way both [sides] can benefit, and going from there.*

The involvement of local industries in co-op programs for credit would avail the student of hands-on training and application, [job] responsibilities and the expectations [of the employer]. The [educational] institution would become more aware of areas of business that are not being addressed in school.

Participation by more employers in the process of educating students! I participate because I believe in this type of education and I feel that as a practitioner in the field I can give first-hand knowledge about materials, equipment, and techniques being used in the workplace now.

Each company should have a plan for school-business participation. Each community or area ... should have an active school/business coalition. We are working on it with the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations.

It's my observation that the school may be overwhelmed with the disinterest of the entry -level students for programs in vocational areas, ... [and] the school staff do not truly understand how to use [the committee] as a resource.

Private sector impact can be increased simply by taking advantage of what is offered by industry. I can't speak for all schools but in nine years at my school, the committee has been simply the formality of fulfilling a Chapter 74 regulation. A sincere interest, and an effort to assure productive cooperation by the program staff and administration would certainly increase the impact, and validate the role of the program advisory committee as a worthwhile aspect of vocational education.

The private sector should be more involved in fund raising and the donations of old equipment to help facilitate better "hands on" training.

The remaining comments related primarily to ways in which the private sector could better provide hands-on opportunities to students (such as using retired persons to supplement workshops, assisting in placement of graduating students, providing internships and guest speakers) and the need to improve the effectiveness of the committees themselves through increased and regular communication between members.

Voc-tech institutions should solicit "real world" professionals for one-shot lectures or one-day seminars. Students should somehow be exposed to the "real world" on a regular basis.

More companies... need to have a more hands-on approach in helping to train students...On-site visits to manufacturing companies...would be very helpful.

Involvement in decisionmaking process and budgetary planning. The present scenario is to present a plan to the advisors rather than the advisors recommending courses of action.

We currently meet 1 or 2 times per year. The agenda is set by the program chair. There are no ongoing communications. We never hear the results of our recommendations.

In addition, some concerns raised in the comments included the desperate need to update equipment but the reality of limited resources.

The electrical department that I advise at ___ vocational school is in serious need of upgrading to today's standards and today's equipment. Most of our teaching equipment is surplus World War II. It has been very difficult for our instructors to teach under these circumstances.

A few committee members expressed their concern about the persistent stigma attached to students who select vocational courses over academic courses.

The private sector still views voc-ed schools as a dumping ground for academically deficient students who work well with their hands. The stereotyping still exists.

CONCLUSIONS

- Private sector members are motivated and have multiple incentives for participation.
- Among the respondents, incentives for participation are stronger than perceived barriers to committee involvement.
- In general, members report a moderate level of participation and effectiveness on vocational education committees, although almost half believe that this impact is insufficient.
- Many members feel that they are not fully utilized in the committees, either because they are not asked to do important things, are not frequently called upon to do anything, or both.
- There has been increased participation in several activities undertaken by vocational-technical committees since the mid-1980s. However, involvement in certain activities has remained consistently low. It is unclear how committees prioritize their activities, given the multiple objectives contained in governmental reports and legislation.
- In particular, two areas in which vocational education committees might enable greater private-sector participation are in providing work-related experiences for students and in encouraging students to continue their education. These are areas of high personal incentive for committee members but only moderate involvement. Perhaps implicit in this picture is that private sector members are looking for broader involvement in vocational education that goes beyond planning and one that is more immediately concerned with students.
- At the same time, the very real time constraints of private-sector members must be taken into account. Perhaps one of the solutions is to allow these members a greater decision making role in their committees, a recommendation made by several respondents in their written comments. Also, it might be interesting to explore further the goals of private sector members within their committees, and how these might contrast with those of the school and other public sector bodies.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The Council recommends:

1. Program and General Advisory Committees should be required to elect a chair from among private sector members. This private sector role must be vigorously monitored.

2. General Advisory Committees must establish annual priorities reflecting local, state, and federal goals. Achievement of goals must be annually evaluated.

3. Each school's General Advisory Committee should be required to make an annual report, with recommendations, to the superintendent for presentation to its district or regional school committee.

4. Vocational Education General Advisory Committees and Regional Employment Boards (PICs) should meet biannually to consider policy and program needs of their respective regions. Information on their respective purposes and activities should be regularly exchanged.

5. An analysis should be made of distinct differences in the composition of Vocational Committees and Regional Employment Boards (PICs). Particular attention should be paid to the area of industry represented, size of each member's workplace, and occupational position.

6. Cross-over private sector membership should occur between Vocational Education Committees and the Regional Employment Boards.

7. The '90-'91 State assessment should place the highest priority on reviewing data concerning the relationship between source of committee membership and projected labor market demand.

8. Program and General Advisory Committees must receive technical assistance to improve their involvement in guidance policies and practices, the upgrading of instructors' skills, and meeting the needs of special populations.

9. The Board of Education should request that vocational schools pursue strategic planning with private sector members based on this study's findings on incentives for involvement.

10. As private sector interest in educational quality will inevitably become more intensive, the Council recommends that barriers to participation be regularly reviewed.

11. A further state-wide study on the internal workings of Vocational Education Advisory Committees should take place.

12. The organization and activities of Advisory Committees at community colleges under the 1990 Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act should be assessed.

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APPENDIX A
DISCUSSION: ORIGINAL SAMPLE POPULATION AND THOSE COMPLETING SURVEY

Due to resource limitations, the State Council was not able to select a stratified random sample that would enable sampling of all Chapter 74 program areas. The criteria used in selecting the sample was that program areas with at least 200 students enrolled throughout the state would have one committee surveyed. One committee would be surveyed for every 250 students enrolled beyond that, up to 10 committees. For example, it was decided that the Painting and Decorating program area, which had an enrollment of 550 students in the 1989-90 school year, would have two program advisory committees surveyed.

Once numbers of program advisory committees per selected program area were determined, four business and industry representatives from each committee were selected to be surveyed: the chair (also a member of a general advisory committee) and three other, randomly selected members). Student enrollment figures and membership lists (derived from Chapter 74 forms) were provided by the Division of Occupational Education of the Massachusetts State Department of Education.

The following charts summarize the original sample population and the population that completed the survey according to major program area and type of school.

Chart 1. TARGET AND ACTUAL SAMPLE POPULATION, BY MAJOR PROGRAM AREA

Major Program Area	Original Sample	Survey Respondents†
Construction (e.g., carpentry, electrical, plumbing, masonry)	25%	22%
Service occupations (e.g., cosmetology, commercial art, culinary arts)	18%	25%
Technical (e.g., computer programming, drafting, electronics, graphic arts)	14%	20%
Marketing (e.g., general merchandise, marketing, hotel and lodging)	13%	6%
Automotive (e.g., auto mechanics, body and fender repair)	11%	5%
Industrial/Manufacturing (e.g., machine shop, metalworking, cabinetmaking)	10%	8%
Allied Health (e.g., nursing assistant)	7%	13%
Agriculture (e.g., horticulture)	1%	0%
	99%*	99%
	(n= 556)	(n=142)

† Figures based on the 99 respondents who correctly answered this question. All 142 respondents are presumed to be members of program advisory committees.

* Totals 99% due to rounding of figures. Does not include three community college committees for general or local education.

Chart 2. TARGET AND ACTUAL SAMPLE POPULATION, BY KIND OF SCHOOL

Educational Institution		Original Sample	Survey Respondents
Regional vocational-technical		38%	55%
City/town and Comprehensive		32%	36%
Academic regional	15%	1%	
Community college		14%	7%
County vocational-agricultural		1%	1%
		100%	100%

Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education
SURVEY
PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The main purpose of this survey is to find out about the effectiveness of private sector involvement in vocational education throughout the state. You are among a random sample of private sector members on program advisory committees who have been selected to fill out the survey. Your cooperation will help ensure that the results are comprehensive and reliable. Your answers are confidential and results will not be reported in any way that can identify you.

a. You have been identified as a current or former member of a program advisory committee. Are you now serving or have you in the past served as a member of a program advisory committee?

___ Yes. (If so, please complete the rest of the survey.)

___ No. (If not, please do not complete the rest of the survey but do return the survey in the envelope provided.)

I. Vocational Background

1. Please indicate your involvement in vocational education and training by indicating **as many** of the following that apply:

I am a member of a

___ general advisory committee (voc ed)

___ program advisory committee (voc ed) program area: _____

___ Regional Employment Board

___ other (*please specify*) _____

NOTE: If you are a member of more than one of the above committees, please base your responses on your experiences as a member of one vocational education program advisory committee. (Please specify which program advisory committee, if you belong to more than one.)

2. How long have you been (were you) a member of the program advisory committee?

___ 1 year or less ___ 1-2 years ___ 2-3 years ___ 3 or more years

Are you still serving on the committee? Yes No

3. Was the chair of your program advisory committee elected/ appointed from within?

___ Elected ___ Appointed by _____ ___ No chairperson
(title)

4. Are you the Chair or Vice-Chair of either a program or general advisory committee?

___Chair ___ Vice-Chair ___ Neither position

5. Please indicate the type of education facility with which you are **primarily** involved:

___ community college ___ regional vocational-technical school

___ academic regional school ___county vocational-agricultural school

___ city/ town vocational school ___ comprehensive high school

6. Do you receive written or verbal responses to your committee's recommendations from your school at least once a year?

Yes No

7. *Please answer Q7 if you are a **new** member of a program advisory committee **since 1985**.*

In your orientation to committee membership, were you exposed to any of the following materials developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education?

Vocational Technical Advisory Committees: A Guide to Effective Utilization	Yes	No
Videotape accompanying above text	Yes	No

8. Please indicate your occupational position by checking **one** of the following:

___ Owner of small business ___ Manager, vice president

___ Supervisor ___ Professional personnel

___ Technician ___ Agriculture specialist/ Farmer

___ Clerical personnel ___ Sales representative

___ CEO of small business ___ CEO of large business

___ Labor/ Trade ___ Other _____

9. What is the size of your workplace?

___ Under 10 employees

___ 10-99 employees

___ 100-249 employees

___ 250-499 employees

___ over 500 employees

10. Indicate your primary area of industry by checking **one** of the following:

___ Health services

___ Manufacturing (traditional)

___ Construction trades

___ Technology (manufacturing, services)

___ Repair services

___ Transportation, communication, utilities

___ Government (incl. postal & military)

___ Retail trades

___ Hospitality services, e.g., lodging, food

___ Agriculture

___ Personal services, e.g., cosmetology

___ Social services, e.g., child care, famly serv.

___ Finance, insurance, real estate

___ Other _____

II. Level of Private-Sector Participation and Effectiveness

11. How significant has your involvement been in the following activities? Please use the scale: 3= very significant; 2=somewhat significant; 1=not significant at all; na=not applicable

	Significance of Involvement high	some	none	
Help school establish/revise goals of vocational education	3	2	1	na
Help school set priorities for budgetary expenditures	3	2	1	na
Advise on applications for State/Federal program funds	3	2	1	na
Advise school on local job market trends	3	2	1	na
Help make programs and courses relevant to workplace needs	3	2	1	na
Advise on extent to which basic skills should be taught	3	2	1	na
Advise on extent to which higher order thinking skills should be taught	3	2	1	na
Serve as/ arrange for guest instructor or speaker	3	2	1	na

Significance of your involvement in the following activities? *(continued)*
3=very significant; 2=somewhat significant; 1=not significant at all; na=not applicable.

	Significance of Involvement			
	high	**some**	**none**	
Review and evaluate course materials	3	2	1	na
Review existing equipment, facilities and resources	3	2	1	na
Identify new skill requirements	3	2	1	na
Recommend new equipment for programs	3	2	1	na
Develop criteria for evaluating quality of vocational programs	3	2	1	na
Recruit students into vocational education programs	3	2	1	na
Review school's career guidance policies and activities	3	2	1	na
Encourage students to continue their education	3	2	1	na
Address unique needs of special school populations	3	2	1	na
Provide in-service or work experience opportunities for upgrading instructors' technical skills	3	2	1	na
Arrange for occupation-related field trips for students	3	2	1	na
Provide hands-on instruction to students *in the workplace*	3	2	1	na
Identify potential sites for cooperative or other types of work experience	3	2	1	na
Help aquaint the community w/ needs of vocational education	3	2	1	na
Collaborate with the local Private Industry Council/ REB	3	2	1	na
Help secure equipment donations, outside funding for program	3	2	1	na

12. What is your overall level of participation in vocational education?

    3=high; 2=moderate; 1=little; 0=none _____

13. What is the overall effectiveness of your participation in vocational education?

    3=high; 2=moderate; 1=little; 0=none _____

III. Potential Barriers for Private-Sector Involvement

14. Please rank each of the following potential obstacles to your involvement in vocational education using the scale:
3=high barrier; 2=some barrier; 1=no barrier; dk=don't know/ no response.

	high	some	no barrier	
Opportunities for participation infrequent.	3	2	1	dk
Previous efforts have had little or no impact.	3	2	1	dk
Not asked to do important things.	3	2	1	dk
Committee membership a formality.	3	2	1	dk
Don't have sufficient time.	3	2	1	dk
Inadequate support staff on committee.	3	2	1	dk
Pressure to provide material resources.	3	2	1	dk
Too much paperwork involved.	3	2	1	dk
Geographical distance.	3	2	1	dk
Insufficient background information provided by school administrators.	3	2	1	dk
Unclear mission or role.	3	2	1	dk
Poor communication among committee members.	3	2	1	dk
School administrators not receptive to change.	3	2	1	dk
Differing philosophies.	3	2	1	dk
Company places low priority on my involvement.	3	2	1	dk
Lack of expertise in skill demands in local area.	3	2	1	dk
Lack of expertise in academic/curricular area.	3	2	1	dk
Other: _____	3	2	1	dk
Other: _____	3	2	1	dk

IV. Potential Incentives for Private-Sector Involvement

15. Please rank each of the following potential incentives to your involvement in vocational education using the scale:
3=high incentive; 2=some incentive; 1=no incentive; dk=don't know/ no response.

	high	some	no incentive	
Serves students/ schools				
Improve basic skills of students graduating from secondary institutions.	3	2	1	dk
Improve the quality of vocational education/ training.	3	2	1	dk
Provide opportunities for work-related experience.	3	2	1	dk
Enhance students' career decisionmaking.	3	2	1	dk
Encourage students to continue their education/ training.	3	2	1	dk
Modernize and update equipment in schools.	3	2	1	dk
Enhance the participation of special student populations (such as minorities, economically disadvantaged, displaced homemakers and handicapped persons).	3	2	1	dk
Enhance sex equity in access to all occupations.	3	2	1	dk
Serves private sector/ company				
Recruit potential employees.	3	2	1	dk
Improve the relevance of vocational education to workplace needs.	3	2	1	dk
Recruit students into vocational programs.	3	2	1	dk
Provide public relations benefit for company or organization.	3	2	1	dk
Improve relations with local vocational education institutes.	3	2	1	dk
Network with other local businesses.	3	2	1	dk
Serves community/ economic development				
Contribute to my community or school system.	3	2	1	dk
Coordinate and share information with schools and other private sector organizations involved in economic development.	3	2	1	dk
Increase U.S. competitiveness in world market.	3	2	1	dk
Other: _____	3	2	1	dk
_____	3	2	1	dk

V. Recommendations for Improving Private Sector Effectiveness

16. Do you believe the overall impact of the private sector on vocational education is sufficient?

Yes No Not sure

If not, please describe how private sector impact might be increased. Please be specific.

VI. Personal Information

17. Gender: (*circle one*) Female Male

18. Please indicate your ethnicity:

___ Black (not of Hispanic origin)

___ Hispanic

___ White (not of Hispanic origin)

___ American Indian or Alaskan native

___ Asian or Pacific Islander

___ other (*please specify*) _____

19. Are you a disabled or handcapped person? Yes No

** Are you willing to be contacted for a follow-up telephone interview or for participation in a focus group meeting to discuss the survey results? Yes No

If yes, please clearly write your name and daytime telephone number below so that we may contact you. Your survey responses will remain confidential.

Additional Comments:

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to the State Council on Vocational Education, State House, Room 51, Boston, MA 02133 in the attached, self-addressed, stamped envelope.